

**Northern Middlesex Council of Governments**  
**40 Church Street, Suite 200**  
**Lowell, MA 01852**

**Minutes of Meeting: June 16, 2021**

The June 16, 2021 meeting of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments was held virtually on the Zoom platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. with Chair Andrew Deslaurier presiding. The following were in virtual attendance, as indicated in Attachment #1:

Councilors

- Andrew Deslaurier, Chair, Billerica Board of Selectmen
- Mary McBride, Billerica Alternate
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Select Board
- George Zaharoolis, Chelmsford Alternate
- Daniel Rourke, Lowell City Council
- Gerard Frechette, Lowell Planning Board
- Stephen Themelis, Pepperell Alternate
- Anita Tonakarn-Nguyen, Westford Select Board
- Darrin Wizst, Westford Planning Board

Staff

- Beverly Woods, Executive Director
- Jay Donovan, Assistant Director
- Bert Almeida, Financial Officer
- Carlin Andrus, GIS Specialist
- David Righter, Environmental Planner
- Katrina Garavanian, Executive Assistant

**I. Minutes of Meeting: May 19, 2021**

The minutes of the May 19, 2021 meeting were distributed to all Councilors for review. Based on a motion made by Steve Themelis and seconded by Mary McBride, the Council voted to approve the minutes of the May 19, 2021 meeting.

**II. Executive Director's Report**

The Executive Director's Report was previously distributed to the Councilors for review. The report is included as Attachment #2.

### **III. Financial Report and Warrant**

Bert Almeida presented the Financial Report and the Warrant for review and approval. Based on a motion made by Jerry Frechette and seconded by Darrin Wizst, the Financial Report and Warrant were unanimously approved. The Financial Report is included as Attachment #3. The warrant was sent by mail for signatures due to the COVID pandemic.

### **IV. Old Business**

#### **1. Draft FY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program**

Beverly Woods reminded the Council that Justin Howard had provided an overview of the draft FY 2022 UPWP at the previous meeting. The document was subsequently released by the MPO for the required 21-day public comment period. A public meeting on the work program was held on June 9<sup>th</sup> and no comments were received. She added that FHWA recently provided several comments on the document that were not substantive in nature. NMCOG staff are anticipating additional comments from MassDOT in advance of the June 23<sup>rd</sup> MPO meeting. (An Executive Summary of the document was included in the Council meeting packet.) Beverly requested that the Council authorize the Chairman and MPO Representative to vote in favor of endorsing the document at the upcoming MPO meeting.

Based on a motion by Jerry Frechette and seconded by Mary McBride, the Council voted to authorize the Chairman and the MPO Representative to vote in support of endorsing the Draft FY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) at the June 23, 2021 MPO meeting.

#### **2. NMCOG Annual Meeting**

Beverly Woods reminded the Council that due to the pandemic, it was necessary to cancel the 2020 Annual Meeting. She inquired as to the interest in holding an in-person Annual Meeting in October 2021, as it will be necessary to secure a speaker and a venue in a timely manner. Following discussion, the Council agreed to wait and see how the pandemic situation evolves through the fall and potentially hold a meeting in Spring 2022 or later, circumstances depending.

#### **3. Summer Meeting Schedule**

Beverly Woods stated that traditionally, the Council has chosen to cancel either the July or August meeting. She requested input from the Council as to its summer schedule. The Council opted to forego the July meeting unless matters requiring a meeting should arise.

Pursuant to discussions following Agenda item V.4 – Upcoming Staff Retirements, the Council agreed that the Personnel Committee could meet on July 21, 2021. Should a July meeting of the full Council be necessary, a notice will be sent to the Council members.

#### **4. Other Old Business**

There was none.

#### **V. New Business**

##### **1. Community Reports**

Steve Themelis informed the Council that Pepperell's Town Meeting voted to approve an OPM (Vertec) for the purpose of constructing a new public safety complex as the current buildings are antiquated. The Town also voted down an Outdoor Lighting Bylaw on a very close vote (89-82). The Town's newly approved budget includes funding to hire a full time Town Planner, as well as a part time Social Worker and a part time Human Resources employee. Steve also noted that the Town is still dealing with PFAS in a town well, which has been shut down pending further investigation and action.

Andrew Deslaurier informed the group that, as a result of recent and upcoming retirements, Billerica is in the process of selecting several key personnel replacements. New personnel will include the Assessor, Assistant Town Manager, and Director of Operations. The Town will need to fill the positions of four more department heads by end of December 2021.

##### **2. Project Referrals**

David Righter informed the Council that there is currently one project under MEPA review within our region. The Town of Dunstable, in conjunction with MassDOT, is proposing to construct roadway improvements along Main Street (Route 113). The project extends for a distance of 2,000 linear feet (0.38 miles) and will be implemented between March 2022 and November 2024. The purpose of the project is to improve safety and accessibility, while enhancing Main Street's existing landscape and historic features. The project triggers MEPA review due to impacts on Article 97 property held under a conservation restriction (David Hardman Trust). Comments on the ENF were due and provided to MEPA on June 15<sup>th</sup>. A copy of the comment letter was included in the meeting packet.

Pat Wojtas requested further information on the RMA (Resilient MA Action Team) Beta Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool referenced in the comment letter. David Righter stated that as the tool is in beta form, he used it for the first time on this project. He explained the usefulness of the tool and its deliverables, such as resource recommendations. The following link was provided to meeting participants should they want to try out the RMA tool:

[https://resilientma.org/rmat\\_home/designstandards/](https://resilientma.org/rmat_home/designstandards/)

Based on a motion by Steve Themelis and seconded by Darrin Wizst, the Council voted to approve the staff comment letter as presented.

**3. Results of Audit Services Solicitation – Approval to Contract**

Beverly Woods informed the Council that, every three years, the Council solicits price quotes for annual auditing services. Requests for quotes were sent to several firms and one proposal was received by the submittal deadline. Included in the Council packet was a copy of the proposal letter from Anstiss CPA.

Based on a motion by Steve Themelis and seconded by Mary McBride, the Council voted to contract with Anstiss CPA for audit services for FY21 through FY23.

**4. Upcoming Staff Retirements**

Beverly Woods informed the Council that there are two upcoming staff retirements planned by the end of the calendar year. Jay Donovan will be retiring in October, and she will retire at the end of December. Beverly thanked the Council for a long and fulfilling career and offered her assistance in the search process for a candidate. Jay thanked the Council for the honor of serving and stated that he has enjoyed working with the Council through the years.

Andrew Deslaurier reassured the Council that he and the Personnel Committee will move quickly to determine not only NMCOG’s current needs, but also the future direction of the agency, and will move the process forward as soon as possible.

**5. Report of the Finance Committee – Adjustments to the FY 2022 Budget**

Jerry Frechette informed the Council that prior to the meeting, the Finance Committee met to review the FY 2022 budget and make adjustments to the budget initially set in February 2021. The budget takes effect on July 1<sup>st</sup> and the revisions primarily reflect added revenues received through the Local Rapid Recovery Plan program.

Based on a motion by George Zaharoolis and seconded by Darrin Wizst, the Council voted to approve the FY 2022 budget adjustment as recommended by the Finance Committee.

**6. Other New Business**

There was none.

**VI. Announcements**


There were none.

**VII. Adjournment**

Following a motion made by Steve Themelis and seconded by Mary McBride, the Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 pm.

**CLERK'S CERTIFICATE**

I certify that this is a true copy of the Minutes of the meeting of June 21, 2021.

Attest: 

Stephen Themelis, Clerk